

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

# Staffing to Increase Serving

## - Episode 259

### *Rethinking Volunteer Engagement (Part 4)*

There's a tendency to believe that the more staff a church has, the more ministry they can get accomplished. However, our experience with hundreds of churches has shown that overstaffing tends to lead to under volunteering.

In this episode, Tony and Amy conclude our series on volunteering with a conversation about how staffing decisions and strategies impact volunteer engagement, and how to appropriately staff your church in order to increase serving.

### *How Staffing Impacts Serving*

#### **KEY #1: Overstaffing tends to lead to under-volunteering.**

When paid staff are doing much of the ministry, they aren't as motivated to raise up other lay leaders and build volunteer teams. Pastors, if you do have one of those staff leaders who excels at volunteer engagement, celebrate that leader, promote them to expanded leadership roles, and give them a raise. Make heroes of those staff leaders.

How can we begin to fix this problem?

1. Challenge your staff members to draw out an org chart that includes volunteer leaders and volunteers. Instruct them to "Pretend you have a 12-week sabbatical coming up. What type of roles need to be designed to keep the ministry running in your absence? No staff positions allowed." When these leaders think about how they would get the ministry done if they weren't there, it would help them design a team structure.
2. Lead pastors need to regularly cast vision around what it means to be the body of Christ and the importance for **every** person to recognize they are a part of this body and have a role to play.
3. During the staff recruitment, selection and onboarding process, clearly communicate this: **"Your number one job responsibility, over everything else, is to equip God's people to do the work of God."** Regardless of the role you're hiring, you want your new staff to clearly understand that their job is to equip lay leaders and build teams to engage the mission and

make disciples of Jesus. Or, to put it another way, your ministry is to get ministry done through other people.

**KEY #2: We should not outsource serving opportunities by hiring more staff to do the ministry that God designed for every person who is part of the body of Christ.**

Every Jesus-follower has spiritual gifts they can use to engage with God's mission. While we would never think of outsourcing other key components of someone's spiritual formation (like engaging God's Word, praying or connecting with other believers in a group), we routinely outsource serving opportunities by hiring staff to do the ministry. In essence, we are taking away something that God uses to grow someone's faith—something that provides purpose for people who follow Christ.

We also tend to forget how God uses serving other people to shape our faith. When we serve, not only does that impact the life of the person being served, but there's also something that happens in the life of the person doing the serving.

**KEY #3: Though everyone is responsible for building volunteer teams, one person needs to champion volunteer engagement.**

Every church needs one leader who is thinking about how to engage more volunteers. Every church needs one person who is thinking about strategies for recruiting, onboarding, training and caring for volunteers. Every church needs one person who is working closely with every key ministry leader, both staff and volunteer leaders, to move as many people as possible in serving opportunities.

This person doesn't recruit all the volunteers and build *all* the volunteer teams—every ministry leader is responsible for that—but this volunteer champion should come alongside those ministry leaders and facilitate systems and strategies to make it happen.

You also need a leader who is constantly monitoring your systems and strategies for engaging volunteers and asking the question: Is it working? Are we winning with volunteer engagement? If not, you need someone who is pushing the team to change course and engage improved solutions.

## *Final Thoughts*

Churches often assume that since every staff person should be responsible for engaging volunteers, it's not necessary to hire a staff leader to champion volunteer engagement. Unfortunately, when everyone is responsible for the church's volunteer engagement, no one is. Instead, churches end up with very decentralized systems and strategies for volunteer

engagement and the actual ministry (worship, groups, missions, kids, students, etc.) always takes priority over building teams. That's why every church needs a volunteer champion.

## *Free Training: How to Engage More Volunteers & Leaders This Fall*

Every staff person should share in the responsibility of equipping God's people to do the work of God. We invite you and your staff team to **join us on September 1** for a free one-hour training event, where we're equipping your team to attract and retain more high-level volunteers and volunteer leaders this fall. [Register now.](#)

Listen to the full episode on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or at [theunstuckgroup.com/episode259](https://theunstuckgroup.com/episode259).

### *Special Thanks to Our Sponsor for This Episode:*



Every church leader knows that having trained and engaged volunteers is essential to successfully accomplishing your mission. But if you're like most leaders, you also know how tricky it can be to onboard and equip people for your team.

What if there were a resource that made it easier? ServeHQ is simple video training courses that help you equip volunteers and develop leaders. You can create your own training or use their video library. You can even automate next steps to onboard new people. Check it out at [ServeHQ.church](https://ServeHQ.church).